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ΕΠΙΦΑΝΙΑ,

OR

A Diſcourſe upon the Manifeſtation of CHRIST to the Gentiles By the Appearance of a STAR.

By FRANCIS GREGORY D.D.
And
Rector of *Hambleton* in the County
of *Bucks*.

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To the Right Honourable

HENRY

LORD ARLINGTON,

Lord High Chamberlain of his Majeſties Houſhold,
One of the Lords of His Majeſties moſt Honourable
Privy Councill, &c.

My Lord,

SHOULD I ſay any thing, in this Publick manner, of Your Lordſhips Merits, Worth, and Parts both Natural & Acquired, though Flattery it could not be, yet Vanity it would; becauſe it were to ſay no more than that, whereof every man, who is not a ſtranger to your Perſon, is already ſatisfied.

And to tell the world how much, & in what way, your Lordſhip hath obliged me, is but an an Eaſy and Trivial kind of Gratitude. But as mean a Return as it is, I muſt make This or None. For, as your Honours Soul is too Generous to expect, and your Fortunes too ample either to need or admit, a juſt Recompenſe; ſo are mine too ſlender to make one.

The truth is, where there is an utter Impoſſibility to repay a Kindneſs, it would be ſomething like Ingratitude ſo much as to attempt it; and he, who doth but offer at a Return for Great mens favours, doth thereby derogate from them; he makes them leſs by thinking them capable of being recompenſed.

But though it be too great a Preſumption, in ſuch a caſe, to attempt a Satisfaction; yet, that debt, which can never be diſcharged, muſt be upon all Occaſions, and now is upon This, Gratefully acknowledged.

But had your Lordſhip never obliged me, by any conſiderable Kindneſs, to make this Publick Adreſs; had not Gratitude nivited me to it, yet even Prudence would. For, ſuch is the main Subject of this Diſcourſe, that it can not be Entitled to any Perſon for its Patron ſo fitly, as to your Honour.

For the Perſons, *concerned herein are the* μάγοι, *the* Wiſe *men of the Eaſt. And if this Character of theirs be, as ſeveral Authours think, and our own Tranſlation intimates, not only free from all imputations, but an Elogy and Title of Honour; to whom could I have more properly recommended the Story of theſe* Great Sages, *then to your* Lordſhip, *who are, in this and all other their Laudable Endowments, ſo hugely like them? a Perſon of ſuch eminent* Prudence, *Wiſdome, and underſtanding, as to be ſingled out of* Three *Nations, as the fitteſt man therein, to be made the* Principal Secretary *of* State; *and ſtill to have the ſame Influence upon the* King *of* Great Britain, France, and Ireland, *as theſe* Wiſe men *once had upon the* μέγας Βασιλεὺς *the* Perſian *Monarch.*

Quæ propriè Magia nuncupatur, perfecta creditur, & ſumma Scientia poteſtas, quando Perſarum lingua eſt Magus, *non ferè alius quã* Divinorū In*terpres et Cultor. Cælius Rhod. Lect. Antiq. l. 9. c, 23.*

Beſides, the Thing much concerned in this little Tract is a Star, *which being with us the higheſt* Badg *of* Honour, *it was not poſſible for me to Dedicate a ſubject of this nature to any fitter Perſon than your* Lordſhip, *there being no man, whoſe bloud is not* Royal, *that doth more highly deſerve to* wear *one.*

But

Quæ propter Magis aucto- ratis, perfectis credimus, & ſumma Scien- tia pollent; tandem Perſa- rum lingua eſt Magus, ut fere aliud quod Divinorum in- terpres et Cul- tor [illegible] [illegible] Lett- xatus, l. 3. c. 15.

But whileſt I do thus Publickly acknowledge my Obligations to your Lordſhip, *I ſhall only contract upon my ſelf new ſcores, and render my Debt ſo much the greater. For if it ſhall pleaſe your* Honour *to permit theſe Papers to walk abroad under the* Protection *of your Great Name, it will yet further oblige their mean Authour to pray for the continuance of your Lordſhips Proſperity in this world, and the Aſſurance of your Felicity in the next, which is, and ever ſhall be, the Earneſt Petition of*

Your Lordſhips moſt obliged
and humble Servant.

Fran. Gregory.

St. Matth. 2. 2.

We have ſeen his Star in the Eaſt, and are come to worſhip him.

AS the day of our bleſſed Saviours *Nativity*, is commonly ſtiled by Ancient Writers Θεοφάνεια, the *Appearance of God*, ſo this day, which is the *Twelfth* from that, and the laſt of our *Chriſtmas* Feſtivals, is uſually called Ἐπιφάνεια, the *Epiphany*, or, *Manifeſtations*.

Baſil. M. de hum. Chriſti generat. p. 593.

The Names of Feſtivals ordinarily running in the Plural Number, as the Διονύσια among the *Grecians*, and the *Saturnalia*, among the *Romans*, and the פורים, among the *Jews*; we are the leſs concerned to aſſign a Reaſon, why our Ἐπιφάνεια ſhould do ſo too. And yet St. *Auſtine*, and perhaps from him St. *Bernard*, have left us this account. *Tres apparitiones Domini legimus, &c.* we read of Three Maniſeſtations of our Lord; that to the Wiſe men of the Eaſt, by the Appearance of a *Star* at or near his birth; That to St. *John Baptiſt*, by a voice from Heaven

Auſt. in Epiph. Ser. 1. Bern. in Epiph. Ser. 2.

Heaven, and the viſible Deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt upon him at his Baptiſm, and that by the Miraculous Tranſubſtantiation of Water into Wine to the Gueſts and Waiters at a Wedding. And if all theſe Appearances of Chriſt, according to the Tradition of Antiquity, did happen, as St. *Bern.* tells us, *Una quidem die, ſed non uno tempore*, though not in the ſelf ſame Year, yet upon one and the ſame Day, we have a ſufficient reaſon, why that Greek
Greg. Naz. *Orat.* 40. p. 351. Father might ſtile it in the Plurall number, ἡμέρας τῶν ἐπιφανίων, the day of Appearances.

The Solemn Obſervation of this Feſtival is no kin to any of thoſe Jewiſh Feaſts, which were Antiquated and Aboliſhed at and by the coming of Chriſt; nor yet is it any late Superſtitious invention of any Party of men; but an Antient and laudable uſage of the Chriſtian Church. Indeed, I read of ſome, who refuſed to obſerve it: Saint
Aug. in Epiph. Ser. 2. *Auſtine* tells us, *Diem iſtum Donatiſtæ nunquam celebrare voluerunt*, The Donatiſts, thoſe notorious Schiſmaticks of thoſe times, whoſe Progeny and Spawn are ſome of ours, would by no means keep this day. But as for himſelf, and indeed the whole Catholick Church, he thus profeſſeth. *Nos hunc diem hodie celebramus*, we do now celebrate
Aug. in Epiph. Ser. 2. this Feſtival; and that *In unitate Gentium*, according to the uniform practice of all Chriſtian Nations.

And that the Obſervation of this day was more Antient than St. *Auſtin*'s time, is evident, as from
Cyprianus *de Stella & Magis.* that forenamed inſtance of *Gregory Nazianzen*, ſo from that elder expreſſion of St. *Cyprian* too, who mentions,

mentions, *Epiphania Solennia*, the ſolemn Celebration of the Epiphany.

That, which gave the firſt occaſion to the Annual obſervation of this day, and is ſtill the ground of its continuance, was and is the great mercy of God in revealing the Birth of his Son, and offering ſalvation by him, as well to the *Gentiles*, as to the *Jews*.

Thoſe Select Perſons of the *Pagan* world, to whom God was pleaſed ſo early to manifeſt the Nativity of his Son, and ſo to bring them unto *Bethlehem*, are ſtiled by the Fathers *Primitiæ Gentium*, the firſt-fruits of the Gentiles. And who theſe men were, and what information they had, that the ſo long expected Meſſias and King of the Jews was now actually and newly born; we have this fair intimation given us by the Evangeliſt, and that from their own Mouths, *We have ſeen his Star in the Eaſt, and are come to worſhip him.*

Aug. in Epiph. *Ser.* 2.
Cyprian. de *Stella & Magis.*

The Text contains Three things conſiderable.

1. The *Perſons*, to whom God was now pleaſed to reveal the birth of his Son, *Wee*.

2. The *Occaſion*, Means, or Inſtrument of this Revelation. We have ſeen *his Star*; The ſame God, who thought fit to declare the Nativity of his Son to certain Jews by the meſſage of an *Angel*, was pleaſed to reveal it to certain Gentiles, by the Information of a *Star*, which Star St. *Auſtine* doth therefore call *Linguam Cœli*, The Tongue of Heaven.

Aug. in Epi *Ser.* 2.

3. The *Deſign* and end of this Revelation, the Intention, which God had therein, together with the uſe, which theſe men made thereof, We are come to *Worſhip* him; an act, wherein they did wiſely comply with the purpoſe of God.

1. The Firſt thing in the Text is the Conſideration of the *Perſons* to whom God was now pleaſed to reveal the Birth of his Son, *We*, Which Perſons may be conſidered, Firſt, As to their *Nation*. Secondly, As to their *Title*, and Character, Thirdly, As to their *Quality*, and Fourthly, As to their *Number*.

1. Theſe Perſons in the Text may be conſidered as to the *Nation*, in which they dwell, and from which they came.

The Evangeliſt ſaith only in General, *They came* ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν *from the Eaſt*, but from what part of the Eaſt, he doth not tell us. That they came ἐκ τῆς Περσῶν χώρας, from the *Perſians* country, is the Aſſertion of St. *Chryſoſtom*; and accordingly great St. *Baſil* ſtiles them, γένος Περσικοὶ, Men of a *Perſian* Extraction; The ſame *Gregory Nazianzen* ſeems to intimate, when he ſaith τὸ μαγεύειν, Περσικὸν, The Magick Art is a *Perſian* thing.

Chryſ. *in Math. Hom.* 6.
Baſil *M. de Chriſt. gener.*
Greg. Naz. *adv.* Jul. *Orat.* 3.

There are ſome, who think, that they came from *Meſopotamia*; St. *Cyprian* ſaith expreſly, *a fluminibus Æthiopiæ*, they came from the Rivers of *Ethiopia*. but, notwithſtanding theſe opinions, it is more probable that they came from *Arabia*. For, as *Grotius* well obſerves, *Munera, quæ attulerunt, Arabica ſunt*, and ſo *Maldonate*, *Ipſa munera Patriam produnt*, whence they came, we may gueſs by what

Cypr. *de ſtella & Magis*.

Grot. *in loc.*
Maldonat. *in locum.*

what they brought, *Gold, Frankincenſe, and Myrrh*, which were the great Commodities of *Arabia* the happy.

This laſt opinion ſeems to be countenanced by that expreſſion of the Pſalmiſt, which litterally belongs to *Solomon*, but is thought to have had a ſecond completion in *Chriſt*, *The Kings of Tarſhiſh and of the Iſles ſhall bring preſents; the Kings of Arabia and Sheba ſhall offer Gifts*, which latter clauſe St. *Hierom*, and our old Tranſlation, reads thus, *Reges Arabum* the Kings of *Arabia* ſhall offer gifts, and withal St. *Hierom* tels us, *Hoc in Magorum muneribus inchoatum*: the firſt accompliſhment of this Prophecy, as it relates to our bleſſed Saviour, was by the gifts of Theſe very men in the Text.

Pſal. 72.10.

Hieron. in Iſai.

But whether theſe men were Perſians, or Arabians, or of ſome other Nation 'tis not much material, as to any concern of ours. This, wherein our Intereſt lieth, is ſure enough; namely, that they were none of the Jewiſh nation; but, as St. *Cyprian* ſtiles them, *Alienigenae*, Aliens and Strangers, Ἔθνος ἀπηλλοτριωμένον τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ξένον, ſaith great St. *Baſil*, They were men of the Pagan world; and, as *Zegerus* calls them, *Exordium, ac Typus Gentium crediturarum*; They were the Beginning, the Pattern, and Repreſentatives of all the Gentiles that ſhould afterwards believe in Chriſt. And, upon this conſideration, do we upon this day ſolemnly bleſs our God for their acceſs to Chriſt, as being the firſt inſtance and Type of Ours.

Cyp. de Stella et Magis.

Baſil. M. de humana Chr. generat.

2 Theſe Perſons in the Text may be conſidered as to that Title and Character that is given them.

The Evangeliſt tells us in the Verſe immediately before the Text, *There came Wiſe men from the Eaſt*, ſo we; but the Greek thus, There came μάγοι, Magicians; a word of promiſcuous uſe, which ſometime ſignifieth that which is Good and laudable; and ſometimes that which is Bad and deteſtable; for

Magiam feſto plauſu ſapientiſſimus quiſq; excipit, veneratur, ac colit, ut quæ altiſſima ſanctiſſimæque Philoſophiæ. Cælius Rhod. lect. antiq. l. 9. cap. 23.

1. To be a Magician doth ſometimes imply no more than to be a very Learned and knowing man; and more particularly in that part of learning, which relates to the Sun, Moon, and Stars.

Theophyl. *in locum.*

Munſt. *in locum.*

That theſe Magicians in the Text were ſuch only in this firſt and commendable ſenſe, is the opinion of ſeveral Interpreters, *Οἱ μάγοι ἀστρολόγοι*, Theſe Magicians were *Aſtrologers*, ſo *Theophilact*; *Munſter* calls them, *Præcipui ſiderum contemplatores*, Men very Eminent for their contemplation of the Stars. Which is in it ſelf a thing ſo laudable, that *Maldonate* ſuppoſeth the Evangeliſt to give them the Name of Magicians, *honoris cauſa*, as an Elogy and high Commendation; as being a Title of the ſame nature with that of *Caldeans* amongſt the *Aſſyrians*; that of *Gymnoſophiſts* or *Brachmanes* amongſt the *Indians*; that of *Hierophantæ* amongſt the *Egyptians*; and that of *Druidæ* amongſt the *Gaules*; all which are Terms of Honour and Veneration.

And ſutable to this opinion doth our Tranſlation give them this favourable and friendly Character; There came *Wiſe men* from the Eaſt: ſuch as the old Greeks ſtiled, *σοφοὶ*, the *Sages* of their times; as if God, being willing to give the whole world an early notice that he ſent his ſon to Redeem perſons of *all* ſorts, men of all capacities, was pleaſed to reveal his birth, as to ſome illiterate and ſilly *Sheepheard* among the Jews, ſo to ſome Learned men amongſt the Gentiles.

2. To be a *Magitian* doth ſometimes ſignifie to be a *Conjurer*; one, that deals with a Familiar Spirit; one, that receives Informations and Aſſiſtances from Hell.

Such were *Jannes* and *Jambres*, Ἄνδρες ἱερογραμματεῖς, ſaith *Numenius*, Sacred Scribes or Prieſts of *Memphis*, but withall *Principes Magorum*, the very cheif of thoſe Egyptian Conjurers, who, through the permiſſion of God and help of the Devil, counterfeited the Miracles of *Moſes*, and thereby contributed a great deal towards the hardning of *Pharaoh*'s heart.

Druſius ex *Numenio et Nathana.*

Such an one was that infamous *Simon*, Sirnamed *Magus*; who was, as *Euſebius* ſtiles him, γόης, a Notorious Impoſtor; one, that through the Devils aſſiſtance proved ſo lucky in his cheats, that, as the *Evangeliſt* ſaith, he was thought to be *the great power of God*. So ſtrongly had he bewitched the Citizens of Rome, ὡς ἀνδριάντος ἀναθέσει οἷα Θεὸν τιμηθῆναι, ſaith *Euſebius*, that in honour of him they erected a Statue to him with this Inſcription. *Simoni Sancto Deo*, To *Simon* the holy God.

Euſ. *Hiſt. l.* 2. *c.* 14.

Acts 8. 10.

Euſ. *Hiſt. l.* 2. *c.* 14.

From this Black-art doth *Eraſmus* acquit the men in the Text. *Nemo maleficas artes ſomniet*, &c. Let do man dream that they uſed this deviliſh Art, and ſo *Munſter*, *Non quod Magiam exercuerunt, ſed eam tenebant, ut confutare poſſent*, They are called

Eraſm. in *locum.*

Munſter. *in locum.*

Magicians, not that they themſelves did exerciſe that helliſh Art; but that they learnt and underſtood it in order to confute it.

But although theſe Interpreters have ſuch charitable thoughts of theſe Magicians in the Text, yet others there are, who judge more hardly of them. For, *Origen* ſeems to mention them, as men *δαίμοσιν ὁμιλοῦντας*, that converſed with Devils; and Great St. *Baſil* ſaith of them *ταῖς μαντείαις προσέχοντες*, &c. They gave themſelves to Incantations, St. *Auſtin* mentions *Impietas in Sacrilegiis Magorum*, the Wickedneſs and Sacriledge of theſe Magicians, and that they were ſuch in the worſt ſenſe, *Probabile eſt*, 'Tis probable, ſo *Grotius*, *Non dubium eſt*, There is no doubt, ſo *Ravanellus*.

Origen. *adv.* Celſ. *l.* 1. *p.* 45.
Baſ. *de hum. Chriſti generat. p.* 591.
Aug. *in Epiph. Ser.* 3.
Grot. *in locum.*

And indeed this conſideration of theſe Perſons is very conſiſtent with the deſign of God in the Incarnation of his Son, whom He ſent amongſt us to ſave ſome of the higheſt Criminals, as well as other who are much leſs Offendors. Upon which account, *Celſus in Origen* quarrels with our bleſſed Saviour for choſing ſuch men to be his Servants, as were *τελώνας καὶ ναύτας πονηροτάτους*, Publicans and Seamen, both which were commonly obſerved to be Vile and Wicked Perſons; ſo impious, that they are ſtiled in a certain Epiſtle, aſcribed to St. *Barnabas*, *ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν ἁμαρτίαν ἀνομωτέρους*, Wicked even beyond all wicked Examples.

Orig. *adv.* Celſ. *l.* 1. *p.* 47.

But what ſuch profane wretches, as *Celſus*, caſt as a Reproach upon our bleſſed Saviour, was indeed the greateſt Argument of his Goodneſs, and one main deſigne of his coming into the world; for thus he tells us, *I came to call Sinners to repentance.* What kind of Sinners doth he mean? *Peccatores* κατ' ἐξοχήν, ſaith *Druſius* he means even the moſt Notorious Sinners that can be; an evidence whereof God gave the world betimes, in that he was pleaſed, by an extraordinary courſe, to reveal the birth of his Son, not only to certain Sheepherds, that more ſimple, harmleſs, and innocent kind of Perſons; but even to theſe Magicians in the Text; who, if Sorcerers and Conjurers, as many ſuppoſe, were certainly ſome of the vileſt of men; ſo vile, that they were to dye without mercy by the expreſs law of God. And if ſuch as theſe, upon their Converſion, were not excluded from having a ſhare in the benefits and ſatisfaction of Chriſt; there is no ſinner ſo great, but, if he will timely come in, as theſe men did, he may yet find the ſame Acceptance.

Mat. 9. 13.
Druſius in Mat. c. 9. v. 10.

3. Theſe Perſons in the Text may be conſidered in reſpect of their Station and Quality in the world.

As to this, *Zegerus* tels us, *Haud quaquam viros vulgares ac Plebeios*, Theſe Magicians were Perſons of no ſmall account; St. *Cyprian* calleth them *Tanti nominis Perſonæ*, Men of a very great Eſteem and Reputation; men of high Authority in matters both Religious and Civil. *Sozomen* ſaith of them ὥσπερ φῦλόν τι ἱερατικὸν Περσῶν θρησκείας ἐπιμελοῦνται, Theſe Magicians amongſt the Perſians did, as a Tribe of Prieſts, manage the whole concerns of their Religion. And as to matters of State, *Socrates* tells us, παρὰ τῷ Περσῶν βασιλεῖ πολλὴν ἰσχύειν. They were men of great Prevalence and ſwayed much with the Perſian King.

Zegerus *in locum.*
Cypr. *de de ſtella et Magis.*
Sozom. *Hiſt. l.* 2. *c.* 9.
Socrates *Hiſt. l.* 7. *cap.* 8.

So

Tertul. *adv.* Judæ. 9. *Poſt ablatum Mago Imperium &c.* Sen. *de Ira. l.* 3. Theophyl. *in* Matth. *c.* 2.

So great an eſteem had the people for them, that *Tertullian* tels us *Magos Reges ferè habuit Oriens*, The *Eaſtern* nations did commonly elect their Kings out of their *Magicians*. And that theſe very men in the Text were *Kings* themſelves, is the opinion of many. *Theophylact* ſtiles them Περσικοὺς βασιλεῖς. *Perſian Kings*. St *Cyprian* ſaith *apparuit ſtella Regibus*, the ſtar appeared to the Kings, not that any of theſe was ὁ μέγας βασιλεὺς the great *Perſian Monarch*, but that every one of them are thought by theſe and other Authors to have been *Princes*.

And perhaps God Almighty, by ſending theſe great men to wait upon his Son, might intend to give the world an early intimation, that the deſign of his Incarnation was to ſave men of *all* rankes & Qualities, in evidence whereof his birth was revealed, as to the *ſheepherds* being men of *low degree* and ſlender fortunes, ſo to theſe *Magicians* in the Text who were Perſons *of great wealth* & Honour.

4. Theſe Perſons in the text may be conſidered in reſpect of their *Number*.

Maldon *in locum.* Druſius *in locum.*

The Evangeliſt, not telling us how many theſe Magicians were, hath left Interpreters at liberty to make their own Conjecture. Some have thought them Fourteen, others Twelve; but the moſt received opinion is, that they were but Three, whoſe Names were, *Jaſpar*, *Melchior*, and *Balthaſar*.

That Three they were, is gueſſed, becauſe the Evangeliſt doth ſtill call them Μάγοι Magicians, not in the Dual, but Plural Numder; and that there but Three, is believed, becauſe their Gifts were no more For this S. *Auſtine* is very poſitive, *Tres ſunt*,

&

& ſinguli ſingula offerunt. Three they were, and each of them brought his Particular Preſent; one his Gold; another his Frankincence, and the Third his Myrrhe.

And who can tell but that God was pleaſed to reveal the birth of his Son to ſuch a ſmall number of theſe great and rich men, to let us know betimes, that the greateſt part of Converts to the Chriſtian faith ſhould conſiſt, as it certainly did in thoſe early ages, of Mean and Inferiour Perſons, a thing, which the Enemies of our Religion did obſerve and laugh at.

It was the matter of *Julian's* ſcoff, that the Profeſſours of Chriſtianity generally were, as St. *Chryſoſtom* expreſſeth it. Οἰκέτας, τίτθας, μαίας, εὐνούχοι, Servants, Nurſes, Midwifes, Eunuchs, *&c.* So he in *Minucius Felix*, who calls them *Profanæ Conjurationis Plebs*, and again, *de fæce infimâ Collecti*, the profane Rabble, the very Dregs and ſcum of mankind; as if that calumny of *Celſus* had been true, μηδεὶς προσίτω πεπαιδευμένος, μηδεὶς σοφὸς, *&c.* No man, that is Learned, or Wiſe, muſt a Proſelyte to Chriſt.

Chryſ. in Cor c. 2. v. 16.
Minucius Fel. Octav.

Origines adv. Celſ. l. 3. p. 137.

That theſe General Imputations were utterly falſ, we have, beſides other Inſtances, a fair Intimation in the Text, wherein we find ſeveral perſons, miraculouſly brought unto, and certainly believing on the Son of God, who were men of a very conſiderable Quality and great eſteem in the World. But withal, it was the obſervation of St *Paul, not many wiſe men after the fleſh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.* And

1 Cor. 1.26

ſuch, were theſe Magicians, σοφοὶ, Men of great wiſdom, δυνατοὶ, Men of great Authority; and, that St. Paul's Character may exactly anſwer their condition, 'tis very probable, that they might be, εὐγενεῖς, Men of noble birth too. Now, though ſome Perſons of this high rank and Quality were ſo early brought to Chriſt yet, according to the Apoſtles aſſertion, they were πολλοὶ not very many. They are preſumed to be but Three, which might be looked upon as a ſad Preſage and Inſtance, that the future number of great men, which ſhould in after ages believe on Chriſt, was like to prove but ſmall. And ſo we paſs from the Perſons, to whom the birth of Chriſt was now revealed, to conſider.

1 Cor. 1. 26.

2. The occaſion, Inſtrument, or means of this Revelation; and that lieth in thoſe words, we have ſeen his Star in the Eaſt, ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ, at its riſing, ſo ſome; but moſt Interpreters read it, as we do *in Oriente* in the Eaſt. *i.e.* Eaſtward from Hieruſalem.

Hammodus *in locum.*

Concerning this Star in the Text we ſhall enquire into theſe Four things; 1. what kind of Star this might be, 2. why this Star is called αὐτοῦ ἀστέρα, His Star, our Saviours Star. 3. when this Star might firſt appear, and. 4. How theſe Wiſe men might know this Star to be the Star of Chriſt, and what they might gather from it.

1. The firſt thing conſiderable about this Star in the Text is it's Nature and Quality, what kind of Star it might be.

That it was indeed a very Glorious light is generally agreed on; St. *Cyprian* calleth it, *Præclari luminis ſtellam*, a Star of eminent ſplendour; So exceeding bright, that, St. *Chryſoſtom* ſaith of it, Ἀκτῖνας ἡλιακὰς [illegible], it out-ſhined the very Sun it ſelf.

Cypr. de ſtella & Magis.

Chryſoſt. Hom. 6. in Matthæum.

But what kind of Star it was, whether it were ſuch as the ſame Father ſpeaks, [illegible] in Nature and Reality, or in Appearance only, 'tis a thing very uncertain. for

Sciſcitatur an Prodigium ſit, an Sidus. Sen. Nat. qu. lib. 7.

1. Some few there are, who imagine, that it might be a Real Star; one of thoſe luminous and heavenly bodies, which God created in the beginning.

Maldonatus in locum.

And as for thoſe difficulties, wherewith our Star, in this notion, would be attended, ariſing from its Motion, Station, and other Circumſtances; the favourers of this opinion do anſwer them all only by appealing to the Omnipotence of God. They tell us, that God, *with whom all things are poſſible*, the ſame God, who did make the *Sun ſtand ſtill* at one time, and perhaps *go back* at another; might, and peradventure did, by the ſame Almighty Power, remove ſome glorious Star from its proper Orb, to the lower region of the Air, to be [illegible], the Torch-bearer of his *Sun*, to light him into the world, and to guide theſe Wiſe-men to the place of his birth. But

Ὁ [illegible] ἀστὴρ [illegible] [illegible] ᾗ [illegible]. Origen in Joan. p. 27.

Origen. adv. Celſ. l. 1. p. 45.

2. The Generality of Interpreters are of another mind, and do think that this Star in the Text was only Equivocally ſuch, as having the Name and Reſemblance, but not the Nature and Quality of a Real Star.

Chryſ. Hom. 6 in Mat.

Theophil. in locum.

St. *Baſil* tels us that it was, Οὐ [illegible] Ἀστέρων, not

Baſil. de humana Chriſti Gener. p. 592.

of

Greg. Nyſſ. *in diem Chriſti natalem.*

Chryſoſtom. *Hom. 6. in Matthæum.*

of the Real Stars; *Gregory Nyſſene*, calleth it, καινόν τι σημεῖον τῶν κατ' οὐρανὸν θαυμάτων, one of the New Prodigies of Heaven; and as for St. *Chryſoſtom*, he delivers his opinion thus, Οὐ τῶν πολλῶν εἷς ὁ ἀστὴρ οὗτος ἦν, This Star was none of thoſe numerous ones, which were made at firſt. And for this opinion there are ſome probable Reaſons given; for

1. This Star was ſuch, as had never been obſerved or ſeen till now.

Orig. *adv.* Celſ. *l.* 1. *p.* 45.

Chryſ. Hom. 6. *in* Mat.

Baſil. M. de *hum. Chriſti gen. p.* 591.

Aug. Ser. 5, & 7. in Epiph.

So thought *Origen*, καινὸν εἶναι νομίζομεν, we judge this Star to be a New one, ſo new, that St. *Chryſoſtom* ſtiles it ἀστὴρ ξένος, a Star that was a Stranger. Accordingly S. *Baſil* ſtiles it ἀστέρα ἀσυνήθη, an Unuſual Star; St. *Auſtine* calls it *Sidus novum*, an again, *Stellam ignotiſſimam*, a New Star, a moſt Unknown one; and tells us withal, that as it never appeared before this time, ſo was it never ſeen any more after it had once conducted theſe Wiſemen to the place of our Saviours birth. But

2. The Region, wherein this Star was ſeen, was much Lower than that of other Starrs.

Origen, *adv.* Celſ. *l.* 1. *p.* 45.

For whereas other Stars are ſituated, as *Origen* ſpeaks, ἤτοι τῇ ἀπλανεῖ ἢ ταῖς ὑποκάτω σφαίραις, Either in the Firmament it ſelf, or in thoſe Orbs, that are next below it; this Star in the Text was ſeen far below the Moon, and near the Ground. Thus St.

Chryſ. Hom. 6. *in* Ma.

Chryſoſtom, τὸ τῶν ἄλλων ἀστέρων ὕψος καταλιπών, This Star leaving the Altitude of other Stars came down; but how low did it deſcend? *Theophilact* anſwers,

Theophil. *in locum.*

Πλησιόχωρος γινόμενος &c. it came down ſo low, as to be a near neighbour to the Earth; much nearer then any other Star, even in its *Perigee*; ſo near, that it ſeemed to ſtand juſt over our Saviours head.

And indeed there was a neceſſity, that this Star ſhould thus Deſcend, becauſe otherwiſe it could not have done that work, for which, it was deſigned; for the buſineſs which it had to do, was to conduct theſe Magicians, not only to the Country or Town, but to the very particular Houſe, where our Saviour was, which work it could never have done, had it been at the ſame height with thoſe other ſtars which ſhine and are fixed above. For although ſuch and ſuch Stars or Comets raiſed up high, may be gueſſed to be Perpendicular and Vertical to ſuch and ſuch whole Kingdomes and large Nations of the world; yet that any Star, at ſo vaſt a diſtance, ſhould directly and certainly point at any Particular Houſe, and that but a little one too, as this Star viſibly did, no intelligent Perſon will imagine.

Upon which account St. *Chryſoſtom* ſaith [illegible] [illegible], This Star *came down*, and ſo even without a Parallaxe, ſhewed theſe Wiſemen the place, where our Saviour was. And if ſo, if this Star in the Text was ſo much lower then all other Stars beſides; we may conclude, that, if there were no Miracle in the caſe, it could not be any of that glorious number.

This Star in the Text, may well be thought to have been much leſs then any natural Star whatever.

St. *Paul* tells us, and our own Eyes may do ſo too, *One Star differs from another Star in glory*: They differ in Degrees of their light, and in Quantity of their dimenſions. For, if our Mathematicians

1 *Cor.* 15.

Keckerm. *Syſt. Aſtron.* *l.* 1. *c.* 2.

ans do not miſinform us; there are ſeveral Stars, that are an 108 times bigger then the whole Terreſtrial Globe; whereas thoſe νεφέλια, in the Milkey way, if Stars indeed, are ſuppoſed to be far leſſer Gemmes, *Stellulæ*, diminutive Stars, ſo do Authours ſtile them.

Gaſſendus *Inſtitut. Aſtr. l.* 2. *c.* 14. Galaxia *cœleſtis tractatus infinitis ſtellulis, quas* Sporades *vocant, inſtratus et luminoſus.* Fromondus *Meteorol. l.* 2. *Art.* 2.

But how ſmall ſoever any Star among the Six ſeveral Magnitudes, may ſeem to be; we may rationally preſume, that this Star in the Text, notwithſtanding its glorious light, was yet far leſs. For, had it been of any ſuch *Magnitude*, as came any whit near to that of other Stars, it could never have led the Wiſe men ſo directly, as it did, to that Particular place, where our bleſſed Saviour was found by them. For, had the Circumference of this Star been any way proportionable to that of other Stars; when it came to *Bethlehem*, and there ſtood ſtill, it muſt have hung, like a Vaſt Canopy, not only over the whole Town, but the whole Country round it, and ſo having an equal aſpect upon all the Houſes there, it muſt needs have left the Wiſe men very uncertain, which might be the right One. But ſince we have a very fair intimation from the Evangeliſt, that, by the ſtanding ſtill of this Star, the Wiſe men were enabled ſo readily to know and diſtinguiſh that Houſe, where our Saviour was, from all its Neighbours; we may thence inferr, that this Star was ſo little, as to be no real Star at all.

4. The Motion of this Star in the Text differed from the common Motion of all other Stars beſides. And this difference lay in Two things.

1. This Star in the Text did not take the ſame Courſe with other Stars.

St. *Chryſoſtom* tels us, [illegible], Never did any Star go the ſame way with this. For, whereas the Sun, Moon, and other Heavenly Luminaries do move from Eaſt to Weſt, this Star moved, as the ſame Father ſaith, ἀπ᾽ ἄρκτου κατὰ μεσημβρίαν, from the *Bear*, *i. e.* from the North to the South, a Motion, ſaith *Grotius*, *Præter naturam*, & *citra exemplum*, Preternatural, and without Example.

Chryſoſt. *Hom.* 6. *in Matth.*

2. This Star in the Text did not move with that Uniformity and Conſtancy that other Stars do.

The Fixed Stars have indeed, as *Gregory Nyſſene* words it, στάσιν ἀκίνητον, a Station ſo firm and ſetled, that they never move, except it be as Parts of, and together with their own Orb. And as for thoſe few other Stars, which have a Diſtinct and particular Motion of their own, [illegible], ſaith the ſame Father, Their Motion never ceaſeth.

Greg. Nyſ. *in diem Chriſt natalem.* p. 776.

Lunaris orbita, cæterorumque ſupra lunam meantium motus nec hæſitat uſquam, nec reſiſtit. Sen. Naturalium. qu. l. 7. 10.

But this Star in the Text ſeemed to be of a double or midle Nature, [illegible], ſaith he; It ſometimes moved, and it ſometimes ſtood ſtill; So the Evangeliſt tels us, Προῆγεν αὐτούς. It went before them, but by and by, ἔστη, It ſtood; a ſufficient Argument to prove, that, if there were nothing Miraculous in it, it could not be a Real Star; no Fixed Star, becauſe it ſometimes Moves; no Planet, becauſe it ſometimes ſtood. But if it were indeed no Natural and proper Star, What was it then? There are Three opinions about it:

1. Some think this Star in the Text was nothing

Baſil. M. *de hum. Chriſti gen. p.* 592.
Origen *adv. Celſ. l.* 1. *p.* 45.

else but a Blazing Star or Comet; kin to thoſe, which St. *Baſil* ſtiles Δοκίδας, Βόθυνοι, or as *Origen* calls them, Πίθοι, Πωγωνίαι; raiſed at this juncture of time by the over-ruling providence of God, purpoſely for this Occaſion.

Baſil. *ut ſupra*

Comites habet ſuam ſedem. Sen. *qu. Nat. l.* 7.
ἀστὴρ πόλιν ὅλον ἐνιαυτὸν Κομήτης.
Euſ. *Hiſt. l.* 3. *c.* 8.
Orig *ubi ſupr.*

St. *Baſil* himſelf contradicts this Opinion, and gives his Reaſon, why This Star could not be a Comet, thus, ὅτι ἀκίνητοι ἢ ἐν περιοχαῖς τόπῳ, *&c.* Comets are Fixed, Unmoveable, and ſo Circumſcribed by their own matter in ſome particular places, as this Star was not. But, I find that *Origen* had other thoughts concerning it, τὸν φανέντα τοιοῦτον εἶναι νομίζομεν, ὁμοῖος κομήτῃ, *&c.* We ſuppoſe this Star to be the ſelf ſame kind with Comets, *&c.* So he, and many others. But,

2. There are ſome, who think that this Star in the Text might be the Ever-bleſſed Spirit of God. As if the ſame Spirit, who was pleaſed afterwards to deſcend in the ſhape of a Dove at our Saviours Baptiſm; had alſo deſcended now at his Birth, in the form of a Star, that ſo he might Viſibly attend the wonderful Nativity of that Bleſſed Babe, whom he had already ſo miraculouſly framed in His Virgin Mothers Womb.

3. There are others, who think that this Star in the Text was, not the Spirit of God, but ſome one of His glorious Angels.

Chryſoſt. *in Matth. Hom.* 6.

We read that an Angel was imployed to declare the Conception of Chriſt to his Mother, His Birth to the *Sheepherds*, and why not to theſe Wiſe men too? *St. Chryſoſtom* calls this Star Δύναμις Ἀγγελική, an Angelical Power, and after him *Theophilact*,

lact, Δύναμις Ἀγγελικὴ εἰς τύπον Ἀστέρος φαινομένη, an Angelical Power appearing in form of a *Star*.

Theophil. in locum.

This Conjecture is grounded upon the Motions of this Star, wherein it ſeemed to be guided with a great deal of Reaſon, even like that Pillar of the Cloud, which of old divided betwixt the Camp of Iſrael and that of Egypt. For *Theophilact* tels us. Κινουμένων τῶν Μάγων, *&c.* when the Wiſe men went forward, the Star moved; and when they reſted, the Star ſtood ſtill.

Exod. 14. 20.

To this St. *Chriſoſtom* addes another Circumſtance to prove this Star to be λογικωτάτην τινὰ δύναμιν, a moſt Rational Power; and that becauſe it did either Conceal or Shew it ſelf, according as the Deſign of God and the Exigence of things did ſo require; as if this Star, according to that of the old opinion of the *Platonicks*, had been endued with Senſe and Reaſon; and had ſome glorious Angel, not only to aſſiſt, but even to inform it too. And thus much for the Nature and Quality of this Star.

Ὡς ἐν [illegible] ἀστέρα ζῶα εἶναι λογικὰ καὶ σπουδαῖα, καὶ φωτιζόμενα [illegible] τῷ φωτὶ τῆς γνώσεως, &c. Orig. adv. Celſ. l. 5. p. 238.

2. The ſecond thing conſiderable about this Star is the Relation, wherein it Stands. The Text ſtiles it, *His Star*: but why His?

Doubtleſs, there is no Star whatever but is our Saviours right; they are all His, becauſe he Made them; they are all His, becauſe he Upholds and Over-rules them. But this Star in the Text was His for a more peculiar reaſon. St. *Baſil* ſaith of it, ἀλλ' ἦν ἰδίως τινὸς ὑπηρεσία, It was ſome Perſons ſtar, and purpoſely made for the ſervice of that Perſon; who that Perſon was, and what Service it did him, *Gregory Nazianzene* tels us, Χριστοῦ μηνυτὴς ἐγένετο, It

Baſ. M. de hum. Chriſti gen. p. 593.

G. Naz. Orat. 4. p. 112.

D declared

Cypr. *de Stella & Magis.*
Tertul. *adv. Judæos.*
Origenes *in Joan. Tom.* 2. *p.* 97.

declared the Advent and Preſence of Chriſt Wherefore St. *Cyprian* calleth it, *Parvuli nati Index*: and ſo *Tertullian*, *Index & dux*: and *Origen* ſtile it, Δηλωτικὸς τῆς ἐπιδημίας Ἰησοῦ. All which expreſſions are ſo many Intimations, that this Star was called His Star, becauſe it was deſigned by God to declare the birth of His Son, and to guide the Wiſe men to him. But

Κομῆται ἀστέρες βασιλέων διαδοχὰς σημαίνουσι καὶ ἀρχῶν ἐπάρσεις.
Baſil. M. *de hum. Christi gen. p.* 592.

3. The Third and laſt thing conſiderable about this Star is its Significancy; what there was in it, that could move theſe Wiſe men to believe, that it was indeed His Star; ſuch a Star, as did certainly ſignifie, that the promiſed Meſſias was now actually and newly born.

Chryſ. *Hom.* 6. *in Matth.*

St. *Chryſoſtom* ſaith well, Οὐ τοῦτο Ἀστρονομίας ἔργον, It was not poſſible for theſe Wiſe men ever to have known the birth of Chriſt from the bare appearance of this Star without the Concurrence of ſome other Circumſtances, which might contribute their Evidences too. For, although a long and frequent Obſervation hath taught the world, that Comets do often portend μεταβολὰς βασιλειῶν, ſaith *Origen*; *Nova Imperia* ſaith *Grotius*, Tranſlations of Kingdomes, and Changes of Government: yet that a Particular Prince ſhould be born, at a Particular time, in a Particular Town, to Rule over a Particular Nation, is a thing not to be conjectured, much leſs Concluded, as this certainly was, from any Star.

Orig. *adv. Celſ. l.* 1. *p.* 45.
Grot. *in loc.*

Wherefore 'tis generally believed, that this Star did only give theſe Wiſe men ſome little Intelligence thereby to prepare them for a Greater; that God was pleaſed to deal with them, as being Aſtrologers,

logers, according to their Art; and by the Information af a new Star to fit them the better for ſome other way of Revelation. About which, there are theſe Three Opinions.

1. There are ſome, who think that God might be pleaſed to reveal the birth of his Son to theſe Magicians by the Teſtimony even of thoſe very Devils, with whom they are ſuppoſed to have had very frequent dealings.

But, whether theſe Devils themſelves had yet any certain information concerning the birth of Chriſt, is a thing, which admits of ſome debate. 'Tis thought by ſeveral Interpreters, that the Devils had no certain knowlede of our Saviours Perſon till after his Baptiſm and Temptation in the Wilderneſs; and 'tis probable enough, that God might conceal his birth from them, leaſt otherwiſe they ſhould have raiſed more bloudy Tyrants, than one ſingle *Herod* to have deſtroyed him in his Infancy.

And yet ſome ſtrong ſuſpitions of his Birth the Devils might have from ſeveral Circumſtances; for there were ſuch and ſuch things already done in order to it; the Prophecies, which concerned it, were Accompliſhed, the Time was come, and the Birth of their Meſſias was now grown the Expectation and the common Diſcourſe of the Jewiſh Nation; there was alſo the Apearance of this New & Glorious Star; and beſides all this, *Origen* tels us εὕρισκον οἱ Δαίμονες, καταλυθεῖσαν αὐτῶν τὴν ἐνέργειαν, the Devils did now find, that their Power was now ſuddenly Broken, they were diſabled from doing their uſual feates; they could not now give theſe

Orig. adv. Celſ. l. 1. p. 46.
Baſil. in de hum. Chriſti gen. p. 591.

Magicians in the Text thoſe aſſiſtances, which once they did; their Oracles began to be ſilenced, 'οὐκ ἔτι φθέγγεται δρῦς, οὐκ ἔτι λέβης μαντεύεται, οὐκ ἔτι Πυθία πληροῦται, ἡ Κασταλία σεσίγηται, καὶ ἀδελφὸς ἄφωνος ὁ Ἀπόλλων, ſo *Nazianzene*.

Greg. Naz. *adv.* Julian. *Orat.*4.*p.*127.

And that theſe Oracles ceaſed, either immediately upon, or within, a very ſhort time after, the birth of Chriſt, we may well conjecture from that anſwer, which the Devil of *Delphos* returned to the Roman Emperour, who conſulted him, and that *Duplici Hecatombe* ſaith *Fevardentius*, with an extraordinary Sacrifice, even a double Hecatomb. But what ſaid the Devil being ſo highly treated? *Me Puer Hebræus, &c.* There is an Hebrew Child, that ſtops our Mouthes, and commands us back to Hell.

Fevard. *in Iren. adv. Hær.l.*4.*c.*14.

Nicephor. l.1.c.17.

And truly, this unexpected and ſuddain failing of the Devils Power, being added to the conſideration of this ſtupendous Star, might well fill theſe Magicians with wonder, and give them juſt occaſion to believe, that there was now upon earth ſome Greater Power then that of Hell, though where, and in what Perſon that Power did reſide, the Star as yet had not ſhewed them.

2. There are others, who think that the birth of Chriſt, and the meaning of the Star, was revealed to theſe Wiſe men in the Text by the Miniſtry of ſome glorious Angel.

They, who think that this Star its ſelf was an Angel, need go no further to find out theſe Wiſe mens Intelligencer. But, beſides this opinion, there is a Tradition, which tels us, that there was both a

Star and an Angel too; a litle Boy in the body of the Star, diſcourſing with theſe Wiſe men, informing them that the long expected Meſſias was now newly born; and withal, commanding them to go and do, what they did. But the uncertainty of this leaves room for a Third opinion, which is more probable, and that's this.

3. There are many, who ſuppoſe that theſe Wiſe men in the Text might take occaſion from the Appearance of this Star to believe that the Meſſias was born, by virtue of a certain Divine Revelation, that was formerly made to *Balaam*, and ſtands Recorded by *Moſes* thus. *There ſhall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter ſhall riſe out of Iſrael*, a Prophecy, which the Antient Jewes did certainly interpret of their Meſſias; which was ſo generally known and took for granted, that a certain Impoſtour, ἀνὴρ φονικὸς ϗ λῃστρικὸς, ſaith *Euſebius*; *Filius Mendacii*, ſaid the Jewes; who yet pretended to be the Chriſt, thought it his great Concern to Name himſelf בר כוכב The Son of a Star: and that he did, if *Aynſworth* gueſſes right, with a cunning reſpect to this Prediction; though *Grotius* thinks that he might take that name from the Place of his birth or Habitation.

Numb. 24. 17.

Euſeb. *Hiſt. Eccl. l.* 4. *c.* 6.

Aynſworth in *Num.* 24. 17.

Now, 'tis atteſted by ſeveral Authours, that theſe Magicians in the Text were either of the Poſterity of this *Balaam* themſelves, or at leaſt next Neighbours to them, that certainly were ſo. And if ſo, 'tis very like that they might know their Forefathers Prophecy; and what Interpretation was generally put upon it, and ſo might wait for its Accompliſhment.

Greg. Nyſſ. *in Chriſti natalem.* p. 775.

Cypr. *de ſtella & Magis.*

This being granted, 'tis eaſy to think that this ſo glorious a Star, ſo much differing from all other Stars beſides, might well mind theſe Magicians of their Fore-fathers Prophecy; and not only ſo, but the Appearance, and, as ſome think, the Long Continuance of this Star, in Conjunction with other Circumſtances, might poſſeſs them with a ſtrong belief, that the Jewiſh Prince, whom *Balaam* had Prophecied of, was now actually born; ſo thought St. *Baſil*, τῷ [illegible] τοῦ Βαλαὰμ [illegible] &c. and ſo *Origen*, ἰδόντες Θεοσημίαν ἐν οὐρ͂ῷ, κ' ἔχοντες τὰς τοῦ Βαλαὰμ προφητείας, ἐπεζήτησαν, &c. Seeing the Star, that Divine Prodigy, and being acquainted with the Prophecy of *Balaam*, they took it for granted that the Meſſias was born; and in confidence thereof they undertook their Journey, and at length gave the Jewes this account of their ſo doing, *We are come to Worſhip him.* And here 4 things may be enquired into. 1. Whence theſe Wiſe men came. 2. Wither. 3. When, and 4. Why.

Baſil. M. Hom. 25. de hum. Chriſt. gen, p. 592.
Orig. adv. Celſ. l. 5. p. 46.

1. We may conſider from Whence theſe Wiſe men did come, They came from Perſia, ſay ſome; from Arabia, ſay others; from Meſopotamia, ſaith a Third; from Ethiopia, ſaith a Fourth; but, be it which it will, 'tis ſure that their way was Long, and their Journey great.

For, ſo do all Interpreters tell us, They came μακρόθεν, from far, ſo *Athanaſius*; they came, ἐκ [illegible] πολὺ ἀπῳκισμένης, from a Country very remote, ſo St. *Chryſoſtom*. *Euſebius* ſtiles their Journey, [illegible], ſo great a Journey; ſuch a Journey, ſaith *Theophylact*, as required, πολλοῦ χρόνου πρὸς τ͂ ἐκπλήρωσιν, accompliſhment.

Athanas. Tom. 2. p. 218.
Chryſ. Hom. 6. in Matth. c
Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccl. l. 1. c. 8.
Theophyl. in 2. Matth.

a great deal of time to go it ; and get perhaps not ſo much as he imagined.

And how doth the Practiſe of theſe Magicians condemn many of Us, who declare to the world that we have nothing more of Chriſtianity, then the Name? The Text tels us of certain Strangers, men of great Note in their Country, and came many Scores of miles to find out, and wait upon our New-born Saviour ; but, alas! what do we do? we think it much to come One mile, perhaps one Furlong ; nay, ſometimes we will not come from the very next Door to worſhip God.

Certainly, God is much more indulgent and kind to us of the Chriſtian Church, then ever he was to the Members of the Jewiſh, both as to the Materials and Circumſtances of his Worſhip. He requires not from us either ſuch coſtly Sacrifices, or ſuch chargeable Journeys, as he did from them. For thus did *Moſes* command the Jewiſh nation, *Three times in the year ſhall all thy Males appear before the Lord God.* Exod. 23. 17. But where muſt it be? at the Tabernacle where ever it ſhould be pitched ; but afterwards, at the Temple where ever it ſhould be built. Which being at Hieruſalem, the Evangeliſt ſaith, *In Hieruſalem is the place where men ought to Worſhip.* Joh. 4. 20. Beſides their Weekly ſervices in their Synagogues, which anſwer to our Parochial Churches ; the whole body of their Men, that were able to travel, at what diſtant ſoever they dwelt, were commanded, at three Solemn Feſtivals every year, to go up and worſhip at Hieruſalem ; and our Saviour himſelf, whileſt he was yet but a Child, did do ſo.

And yet notwithſtanding this expreſs command from God; *Jeroboam*, that notorious Hipocrite, for his own ends, could tell the People thus, *It is too much for you to go up to Hieruſalem*, He ſeemes cunningly to conſult his Subjects eaſe; but, in truth, his deſign was to ſettle himſelf the more firmly upon his Throne.

And thus doth the Devil, for his own deſignes, deal with many of us; though the Place, where we are more publickly and ſolemnly to worſhip God, be at no great diſtances from us; not half ſo far as the Markets and Faires, which we readily go to; yet this cunning Devil, for the Eſtabliſhment of his own Kingdom, is apt to tell us, either more immediately by himſelf, by our own ſeduced Hearts, or elſe by ſuch and ſuch curſed Tooles and Inſtruments of his, *It is too much for you to go up to the Temple of God.* And that the Enemy of our Salvation may have the fairer pretence to withdraw ſilly ſouls from our Solemn Aſſemblies, he takes the ſame courſe, which *Jeroboam* did, He ſets up his Calves in *Dan* and *Bethel*, an Anabaptiſt prating in this Conventicle, and a Quaker in that; Only here's the difference, whereas *Jeroboam*'s Calves were made of Gold, theſe of ours are made of a far more ignoble Metal; Men ſo Dull, Heavy, and Ignorant; but withall, ſo Preſuming, Bold, and Confident; as if their Skuls were made of Lead, and their Browes of Braſs.

1 *Reg.* 12. 8.

But were all our Calves like his, Golden Ones indeed; were all the Teachers of our Private meetings perſons of Inoffenſive lives, and as Choyce Abilities as ſome few of our Diſſenters are or have been; yet methinks to worſhip our God in *Dan* and *Bethel*, when we ſhould be doing it at *Jeruſalem*; to worſhip God in this Corner and that, when we ſhould be in the Temple, were a thing more inexcuſable in Us then in the Jews, becauſe We have not ſo fair a Pretence for it, as They.

Aug. Ser. 4. In Epiph.

For, we cannot well pretend, what *Jeroboam* did, *It is too much for you to go up to Hieruſalem*, the Way is too Long, and the Charge too Great; Their Temple ſtood at a far greater diſtance from moſt of them, then our Churches do from us. But ſuppoſe we were at much greater diſtance from the place of Gods publick worſhip then indeed we are; yet to encourage our coming to it for the more ſolemn ſervice of our God, we have a fair example in the Text; where we find ſome Perſons of Conſiderable Quality, Men of Great Parts and Learning; Wiſe men; who did not ſtick to come a very great number of Miles purpoſely to attend our bleſſed Saviour, and ſhew him that reſpect, which was his due; for, they tell us, *we are come to worſhip him*, Come; though their way was Long, and their Journey exceeding great.

Nec ipſa au-tor eſt, ut Re-ges majeſtatis in Seculo, &c. Aug. Ser. 2. in Epiph.

2. We may conſider the Place, whereunto theſe Wiſe men came; What the Firſt place was, the Evangeliſt tells us, *There came wiſe men from the Eaſt to Hieruſalem*; but why ſo? *Hieruſalem* was not the Place of our Saviours Birth; and what then did theſe Wiſe men there?

Mat. 2. 1.

'Tis ſure, that as yet they did not know in what particular place the Meſſias was to be born; and as for the Star, *[illegible]*, ſaith St. *Baſil*, that had now

Baſil. de hum. Chriſti Gen. p. 593.

Aug. Ser. 2. in Epiph.

withdrawn it ſelf & diſappeared. Whereupon theſe Wiſe men, having loſt their Guide, and being wholly left to themſelves and their own Conjectures, thought it much more likely to find this Royal Babe in the Royal City, rather then in any other place whatſoever.

Non ita natus eſt, ut Reges naſcuntur in Seculo, &c. Aug. Ser. 2. in Epiph.

But ſince our bleſſed Saviour was not now to come into the world with that Magnificence and Splendour, which commonly attends the Birth of Secular Princes; ſince he was to appear in a ſtate of Humiliation, and in the form of a Servant, rather then that of a Temporal King, ſuch as theſe Wiſe men thought him; that the Place of his Birth might be ſuitable to its other Circumſtances, it muſt not be the Great Metropolis, but a Little Town, and [illegible] not a well Furniſhed Chamber, but a Stable.

This being a thing, which theſe Wiſe men could never have imagined, God was pleaſed to ſend them to Hieruſalem, there to receive Information from the moſt Learned men of the Jewiſh Church; that ſo theſe Strangers finding him at Bethlehem, which the Jews themſelves acknowledged to be the Place of his Birth, might be the more Confirmed in their Faith, and receive yet ſome further aſſurances, even from This Circumſtance of his Nativity too, that he was indeed the promiſed and true Meſſias.

And here might we ſtand a while and admire the moſt Wiſe Counſels and Providences of our Good and Holy God, who would not conduct theſe Wiſe men directly and immediately to Bethlehem, but he was pleaſed to lead them firſt to

Hieruſalem, deſigning thereby, as to reproach the Jewiſh Nation for their groſs Infidelity, ſo to ſend theſe Strangers home with the greater ſatisfaction, and ſtronger Faith.

Magorum illuminatio magnum teſtimonium Cæcitatis Judæorum. Aug. Ser. 2. in Epiph.

3. We may conſider the Circumſtance of Time, when theſe Wiſe men came. In order to this we ſhall enquire into theſe Three things. 1. When that Star, which occaſioned their Journey, might firſt appear. 2. When theſe Wiſe men, upon the Appearance of this Star, might Firſt enter upon their Journey. 3. Within what Space their Journey might be compleated. As to every one of theſe Particulars, I find a variety of Opinions among Interpreters, who are led only by Probabilities and Circumſtances; there being nothing certain in any one of our Evangeliſts to determine the matter this way or that. For,

1. There is no Text, which ſpecifieth the Preciſe time, when this Star did Firſt appear. There is little ſaid more then this, *We have ſeen his Star in the Eaſt*; but when they ſaw it Firſt, they have not told us.

The preciſe time of this Stars firſt appearing being left by the Evangeliſt at great uncertainty, Expoſitors have took their liberty to make their ſeveral Conjectures, and thus they do it. *Theophylact* ſaith, [illegible] This Star appeared before our Lord was born; but how long? St. *Chryſoſtom* anſwers, [illegible] A very Conſiderable time before; and what that time might be, St. *Auſtine* tells us more particularly thus, *Ante ferme biennium*, Almoſt Two years before.

Theophyl. in Matth.

Chryſ. Hom. 6. in Matth.

Aug. Ser. 7. in Epiph.

And why the Star ſhould appear to theſe Wiſe men ſo long before our Saviours Birth, *Theophylact* gives us this Reaſon, [illegible] So far diſtant from Bethlehem was their habitation, that had not the Star given them warning of Saviours approaching Nativity ſo Long before hand, they could not have come timely enough to the place of his birth to find him there, and to do what they did.

But notwithſtanding this opinion of theſe eminent men, thus backed with ſo conſiderable a Reaſon, other Interpreters are of a different judgment. For Great St. *Baſil* tells us, [illegible] The Wiſe men ſaw the Star ariſing at our Lords Birth; and before him *Origen*, [illegible] What wonder is it, that ſuch a Star ſhould ariſe, not *before*, but *at*, the birth of ſo great a Perſon? So they.

Baſil. M. de hum. Chriſti Gener. p. 592.

Origen. adv. Celſ. l. 1. p. 45.

2. There is no Text, which ſpecifieth the preciſe time, When theſe Wiſe men did firſt begin their journey.

That they did not ſet out Immediately upon the very firſt Appearance of this Star, may well be gueſſed; for, 'tis not likely, that ſuch Great and Prudent Perſons would, raſhly and on a ſudden, undertake ſo long a journey. No, before they did, St. *Baſil* tells us, [illegible] They took ſome time to contemplate this Star, and maturely conſider what it meant.

Baſil. M. de hum. Chriſti gener. p. 593.

And although we ſhould ſuppoſe the Appearance of this Star many Months before our Saviours birth, yet that theſe Wiſe men were not certainly informed what this Star did ſignifie, till Chriſt was actually born, ſeemes to be St. *Auſtin*'s judgment; for thus he tells us, *Eo die, quo natus eſt Stellam viderunt; & quem natum indicaverit, agnoverunt*, The ſame day, wherein Chriſt was born, they ſaw the Star; and whoſe Birth it ſignified, they knew; and being now ſatisfied of this, *Ex illo die, &c.* ſaith he, from That very day they began their journey, though *Theophylact* give it an Earlier *Epocha*, and a much longer date. But

Aug. Ser. 40. in Epiph.

3. There is no Text, which denotes the Preciſe time, when theſe Wiſe men Arrived at Hieruſalem, and went from thence to Bethlehem.

The Evangeliſt ſaith no more then this, *When Jeſus was born there came Wiſe men to Jeruſalem*, but when they came, how ſoon, or how long after his birth, he doth not tell us.

Mat. 2. 1.

Theophylact mentions, but withal rejects, the opinion of ſome, who thought that theſe Wiſe men were ſo Long in coming, that when they came they found him *διετῆ ὄντα*, Two years old. For which Conjecture there is no other ground, ſave only that bloudy command of *Herod* for the Murdering of all Infants thereabouts, which were of that age or under.

But this Reaſon will not do; it will not follow, that our bleſſed Saviour muſt then be Two years old, becauſe ſuch a mercileſs Tyrant, in the exceſs of his Cruelty, and as he thought, in the depth of his Policy, to ſecure himſelf of this bleſſed Babe amongſt the reſt, judged it his concern to murther all other Infants that were ſo.

That theſe Wiſe men came at leaſt within Forty daies after our Saviours birth, ſeems evident from our Evangeliſts; who tell us, that within Chryſoſt. Hom. 6. in Matth. that ſpace of time he was removed from *Bethlehem*, where yet the Wiſe men found him. St. *Chryſoſtom* ſaith, *Dominum involutum*, They worſhiped Aug. Ser. 1. in Epiph. him being yet in his Swadling Clouts; and St. *Auſtine* ſaith *ad Cunabula pervenerunt*, They came to his Cradle, and leſt that expreſſion ſhould not be enough to prove his being ſtill at *Bethlehem*, and Aug. Ser. 2. in Epiph. leſs then Two years old, he elſewhere tels us. *In præſepi tunc jacebat*, He yet lay in the Manger, which doubtleſs he did not very long.

No; 'tis believed that theſe Wiſe men were at *Bethlehem* on the Twelfth day after that of Saviours Aug. Ser. 4. in Epiph. birth; ſo teſtifieth St. *Auſtine*, who ſpeaks of the Epiphany thus, *Hac die magi Dominum noſtrum adoraſſe perhibentur*, The Wiſe men are reported to have worſhiped our Lord upon This day; and that Hammondus ii locum. not in the Anniverſary return of that day in the next year, as ſome have thought; but in the ſelf ſame year, wherein Chriſt was born, the very Firſt Twelfth day from his Nativity. That this muſt needs be St. *Auſtine's* meaning, is evident from what he ſaith elſewhere. For having newly mentioned the birth of Chriſt, he adds theſe words, Aug. Ser. 7. in Epiph. *Paucis diebus inde tranſactis, hodie magi ab oriente veniſſe creduntur*. The Wiſe men from the Eaſt are believed to have came this day, being but a few daies after that of our Saviours birth.

And if ſo, we muſt needs grant, that when once they were ſatisfied & fully informed, what the Star did mean, and that our Saviour was now newly Born, they made very little delay, at leaſt if the Star appeared not, till his birth was over. But they quickly mounted their ſwifteſt beaſts, their Camels, ſay ſome; their Dromedaries, ſay others, that ſo they might with the more ſpeed attend upon our New-born Jeſus.

Cyprianus *de ſtella & magis.*

And doth not this Practiſe of theirs condemn a great deal of ours? For, when they came to worſhip our bleſſed Saviour, they were very Nimble at it; quick, even to admiration. For, conſidering the great diſtance of their own dwellings from the place of our Saviours birth, the difficulty and wonder of their coming ſo ſoon, is one of the greateſt Arguments, that are urged againſt it. But it ſeems, come they did, a vaſt Journey, ſome hundreds of Miles, and yet within a very few daies too.

Such was the Practiſe of theſe Men in the Text; but pray tell me what is ours? Certainly, we have as much need, as great Reaſon, as high Obligations, and many more Invitations to worſhip Chriſt, then they. What Invitations they had, more then that one of a *Star*, we are not ſure. But ſuppoſe that according to the ſeveral Conjectures of Interpreters, they knew and reſted upon the old Prophecy of *Balaam*; or, ſuppoſe they had ſome glorious Angel to be their Informer, yet their Advantages of knowing Chriſt were not like ours. For, whereas they had a Star to guide them, we have a Sun; whereas they had one ſingle Prophecy, that was Myſterious and dark, we have a great many cleer ones; and whereas 'tis poſſible that they might have an Angel to inſtruct them, 'tis ſure that we have a God.

And ſince our Informations concerning Chriſt are more and much clearer then theirs were, let us conſider whether our Practice be ſuteable to our knowledg; whether we attend our Saviours ſervice with the ſame readineſs and eagerneſs as theſe Men did.

For, no ſooner were theſe Wiſe men ſatisfied of our Saviours birth, but away they went, that they might wait upon him with all ſpeed imaginable. The ſame thing the Evangeliſt obſerves of the Shepherds too; for, when the Angel had informed them that Chriſt was born, telling them the Place, wherein they might find him; and giving them a Sign, whereby they might know him, the Text ſaith, they came with haſt, they did not loyter and delay their Attendance, as we do. Lu. 2. 16.

There is not a man amongſt us, but is ſufficiently inſtructed where our bleſſed Saviour muſt now be waited on; not in a dirty Stable, not in a Barn, Apoc. 2. 1. but in his Holy Temple; not lying in a Manger, but walking in the midſt of his Golden Candleſticks. And perhaps we are ſo conformable to the Antient Practice of all other Churches, and the preſent Commands of our own; as that we do repair to thoſe Places, that are conſecrated and ſet apart for the Publick and Solemn worſhip of our Holy God. But, are we as quick as the men in the Text? alas! we are generally too ſlow and backward; we are eaſily detained from the Temple of God, and that perhaps by Profaneſs and Irreligion; perhaps by ſome trivial buſineſs; perhaps by ſome idle and wicked Companions; upon one account or other; we do not come to attend our bleſſed Saviour, 'till the better part of his ſervice be over.

Sure I am, this of ours, as 'tis bad in its ſelf, ſo is it a very ſad thing in its Signification too: for, 'tis a ſhrewd Symptom that our Hearts are naught; it betrayes the Hypocriſy of our Spirits, and gives the World juſt occaſion to ſuſpect, that although we do at length betake our ſelves to the Publick Service of God, yet we do it againſt our Inclinations. For, were we as willing to attend our bleſſed Saviour, as the Shepherds or the Magicians were; there is nothing, but invincible neceſſity that ſhould hinder us from being with him as quick, as They; who tell us in the Text *we are come*, and upon what Errand they came, the next words inform us, [illegible], *we are come to worſhip him*, concerning which we may enquire into theſe Two things. Firſt what that worſhip was, which theſe Wiſe men gave to Chriſt. Second why they did it. As to the Firſt, their worſhip conſiſted in theſe Two things;

Firſt, One part of their worſhip, Homage, and Reſpect to Chriſt, did conſiſt in their Humble Deportment and Reverential behaviour whileſt they were in his Preſence.

The Evangeliſt tells us, when they ſaw the young Child, [illegible], They fell down and worſhiped; not only with their Knees; but, if *Eraſmus* gueſſe right, *Proſtrati*, they fell with their very Faces down to the ground. They did, what *Grotius* obſerves out of *Livy*, *More adorantium procubuerunt.*

Mat. 2. 11.

Grotius in locum.

runt.

[illegible] They Fell down, as men are wont to do in the higheſt Act of Adoration. So he in St. *Paul*, *falling down on his face, he will worſhip God*; ſo *Job*, *He fell down upon the ground and Worſhiped*. Certainly there is no geſture imaginable, whereby the men in the Text could poſſibly have expreſſed a greater Inward Veneration and reſpect to Chriſt, then they did by This.

1 Cor. 14. 25.
Job. 1. 20.

And how ſtands the caſe with us in this Particular? when we come to worſhip our bleſſed Saviour, as theſe men did, what Geſtures do we uſe? are we in all our Addreſſes to God, as Humble and Reverent as They? are we upon our Faces or Knees? are we down upon the Earth, and, were it in our power, would we yet be Lower ſtill? No; we are, many of us, grown too Bold with Heaven; ſo Rude and Slovenly are we in our addreſſes to the Son of God, that we behave our ſelves towards him, as if we were, not Servants, not Petitioners, but rather his Equals. When we are in his Preſence; when we ſpeak to him, or he to us, ſo clowniſh and unmannerly are we in our deportment towards him; that he might well ſay to us, what an Emperour once did to a ſawcy Petitioner, *Neſcivi me tibi eſſe tam familiarem*, I did not know that you and I were ſo familiar.

But O! may we learn a more Chriſtian behaviour in our worſhip of God even from theſe very Pagans in the Text! *They fell down and Worſhiped*. There is no one Poſture, that can poſſibly become us more then this; theſe men have ſet us ſuch a Copy, as we cannot mend, but ſhould Tranſcribe; they have given us ſuch an Example, as we cannot better, but yet muſt Imitate and Reach.

Secondly, Another Part of that Worſhip, Reſpect and Homage, which theſe Wiſe men ſhewed towards our bleſſed Saviour, did conſiſt in thoſe Preſents, which they gave him.

The Text ſaith, *They preſented unto him Gifts*, but what were theſe Gifts of Theirs? Such doubtleſs as were ſuteable to the preſent Condition and Quality of his Perſon; Gold, Frankincenſe and Myrrhe, but how much of theſe? the Context gives us a fair Intimation, that the Quantity was conſiderable; for, the Evangeliſt tels us, *ἀνοίξαντες θησαυροὺς*, *When they had opened their Treaſures, they preſented unto him Gifts*, Certainly, they, who were ſo Great men, who came ſo long a Journey purpoſely to teſtify their Reſpects to our bleſſed Saviour, and in order thereunto brought their Treaſures with them, would never preſent him with any ſmall Trifle, a little Gold, a little Frankincenſe, a little Myrrhe, ſome trivial matter, which might have ſeemed an Affront rather then a Reſpect. And that their Preſents were indeed no ſmall Ones, we ſhall the more eaſily be induced to believe, if

Matt. 2. 11.

Secondly, we ſhall conſider the Motive of their reſpect to Chriſt, the Ground and reaſon why they worſhiped and preſented him ſo and ſo.

Paſt all peradventure they did not do, what they did, from any deſigns of their Own, ſuch at leaſt as related to the advantages of this World. 'Tis St. *Chryſoſtom*'s demand, ποία ἀγαθῶν ἐλπὶς, &c. what hopes could they have to receive any Advancements

Chryſoſt. *Hom.* 6. *in Matth.*

vancements or Honours from a new born Babe, and ſuch a Babe, whom they found yet lying in a Manger? No, the great Motive, why they came and worſhiped him, was the Conſideration of his Perſon. Whether they were ſatisfied of his Dignity by the Appearance of his glorious Star; or whether they underſtood his Greatneſs by the Prophecy of *Balaam*, or the Information of an Angel; we have reaſon to think, that one way or other they were convinced, that our bleſſed Saviour was the very greateſt and moſt honourable Perſon, that the World ere ſaw. 'Tis eaſy to believe, that they conceived theſe Two Notions of him;

Firſt, 'Tis very reaſonable to believe that they took him to be ſomewhat more then an Ordinary Prince.

Mat. 2. 2. Indeed, when they came to Hieruſalem, their demand was only this, *Where is he, that is born King of the Jews?* But did they think him an Ordinary King? If ſo, what meant they by their coming thither, and that, ἐκ τοσούτου διαστήματος, from ſo great a diſtance, purpoſely to adore him? Suppoſe it were, as St. *Chryſoſtom* ſpeaks, [illegible], the cuſtom and faſhion of thoſe Eaſtern Countries to congratulate the birth of Princes, and welcome ſuch Royal Babes into the World with rich and various Preſents; yet this reſpect was never ſhewed to any New-born King, but ſuch as were their Neighbours.

Chryſoſt. ubi ſupra.

'Tis the obſervation of St. *Auſtine*, *Multi jam nati Reges Judæorum*, We read of many Kings formerly born in the Jewiſh Nation; but, amongſt

Aug. Ser. 2. de Epiph.

them all; never was there ſo much as one, that was treated, even in his Cradle, with ſo much reſpect from ſtrangers. Wherefore ſince theſe Perſons in the Text, being men both Great and Wiſe, did think fit to travel ſo many Miles into a ſtrange Land, and to carry their Treaſures with them, thereby to teſtify their reſpect and their Homage to our New-born Saviour; ſuch an addreſs as this, being without any Precedent, and beyond all Examples, looks like an Argument, that they believed him to be, not only a King; but, as indeed he was, the King of Kings, ſuch a King as the World never had beſides.

Secondly, 'Tis not hard to believe that theſe Wiſe men in the Text had received ſome Informations of our bleſſed Saviours Divinity too.

True it is, when they came to *Bethlehem*, they found nothing at all about him, that might ſhew him to be, what indeed he was. They there ſaw no Stately Palace, no Bed of State, no Golden Cradle, no glorious Mantles, no ſuch Attendance, nothing of that Splendour, that might be ſuteable to a Royal Babe, much leſs to a Son of God. Had they conceived no other Apprehenſions of him, then ſuch as might have been framed from his Preſent Circumſtances, they would have been ſo far from reverencing him, as a God; that they might very juſtly have thought him one of the Loweſt of Men.

But although they found him in a Stable, in ſorry Raggs, in a Manger; or, which was almoſt a thing as mean, in a Poor Mothers Arms, without any thing of Attendance near him; yet notwithſtanding all theſe diſcouragements, they did the thing, for which they were come, and that was this, [illegible], They fell down and worſhiped him.

r Grot. in locum *Perſis Patria lex eſt, ut Regis congreſſum affectans non prius confabulandi fiat compos, quàm illi cultum exhibeat adorationis, Cœlius.* Rhod. Lect. Antiq. l. 11. c. 28.

'Tis the Obſervation of *Grotius*, that this kind of Adoration; though the Grecians would never ſhew it to any mortal Man, yet was it uſed in thoſe Eaſtern Countries, from whence theſe Wiſe men came, towards their Kings and Princes. But ſurely had theſe Perſons in the Text took their meaſures of our bleſſed Saviour barely from thoſe Circumſtances, wherein they found him; they might have forborn their intended worſhip, having as little reaſon from any thing about him to think him King, as God.

Aug. Ser. 1. *in Epiph.*

Chalcidus *in Platonis Timæum.*

But that from ſome Information or other they were ſatisfied of his Deity, St. *Auſtine* doth plainly tell us, *Deum cognoverunt*, They knew him to be God; ſo he. And long before him, *Chalcidius*, a Pagan Writer and a Platonick Philoſopher, ſpeaks of them thus, *Dicuntur quæſiſſe recentem ortum Dei, &c.* They are ſaid to have enquired for a God late born, and according to that apprehenſion of theirs, *Vota tanto Deo convenientia nuncupâſſe*, They preſented him with ſuch Oblations, as were ſuteable to the Majeſty of ſo Great a God.

Orig. *adv.* Cell. *l.* 1. *p.* 46.

The truth is, that common Interpretation, which the Fathers do generally put upon theſe Wiſe mens Preſents, do, ſeem to intimate their belief, that theſe Magicians had ſome apprehenſions, that this New-born Babe was, [illegible], God and Man too, [illegible], One compounded and made up of God and Man, as *Origen* ſpeaks. That they had inſteed ſuch Conceptions of him were a thing very eaſy to be believed, if we can but ſuppoſe that theſe Wiſe men themſelves had, in the Choyce of their reſpective offerings, any Conſideration of thoſe things, which the Fathers generally aſcribe unto them.

What their Preſents were, the Evangeliſt tels us, Gold, Frankincenſe, and Myrrhe, but why theſe rather then any think elſe? Did the Providence of God ſo order the matter, that theſe Magicians ſhould, by a kind of ſecret Inſtinct, bring his New-born Son this preſent of Gold, that he might be provided with ſomething to bear his Charges into *Ægypt*, and keep him and his Parents during the time of their approaching Exile there? Were this ſuppoſed, as to their Gold, yet what means their Frankincenſe and Myrrhe? did they preſent him with Myrrhe to anoint and cheer his tender Body; and, as St. *Bernard* fancieth, with Frankincenſe to perfume and ſweeten that naſty Stable, wherein they found him? Had God any particular and ſpecial deſign in all this? Or did the Wiſe men themſelves, of their own motion, pitch upon theſe Preſents, barely as being the Choyceſt Commodities, which their own Country did afford them?

Bernardus *in ſentent. p.* 306.

That there was ſome Significancy in them, and that theſe Magicians did, through a Divine Impulſe upon their Spirits, make choyce of theſe particular Preſents rather then any other matters whatſoever, not barely for the Value of the Things themſelves, but rather from a reſpect had to the Quality of our Saviours Perſon, [illegible] ſo far as I can find the Univerſal opinion of the Fathers. *Irenæus* tels us, *Per ea, quæ obtulerunt, munera, oſtenderunt quid erat, quod adorabatur.* They declared by their Gifts, who and what manner of Perſon he was, whom they adored. Thus doth Great St. *Baſil* teſtify, [illegible] They gave him Gold, as to a King, [illegible], ſaith *Gregory Nyſſene*, they gave their Frankincenſe to him, as to a God, and as for their Myrrhe, a thing uſed in the Embalming of Dead Bodies to preſerve them from Putrefaction, they gave him this [illegible] ſaith *Gregory Nazianzene*, or as *Origen* phraſeth it ſomewhat better, [illegible], as to a mortal Man, who was to Die and be Buried, but withal to ſee no Corruption.

Irenæus *adv. Hær. l.* 3. *cap.* 10.

Baſil. *M. de hum. Chriſti Gener. p.* 592.

Greg. Nyſſ. *in die Chriſti natal. p.* 782.

Greg. Nazianz. *Orat.* 38.

Orig. *adv.* Celſ. *l.* 1. *p.* 46.

And if we may ſuppoſe that the Wiſe men in the Text had indeed theſe Apprehenſions concerning Chriſt; if we may take it for granted, that notwithſtanding the great Poverty of his preſent Condition they did yet believe him to be a King and a God; we have very little reaſon to wonder that they ſhould come ſo many Miles to attend, worſhip, and preſent him ſo and ſo.

’Tis far greater wonder, that we, who are the Members of the Chriſtian Church, ſhould fall ſo unſeemly ſhort even of theſe very Strangers in ſhewing thoſe reſpects, which We, much more then They, do ow to Chriſt. For although that of St. *Bernard* be a truth, *Qui illos adduxit, ipſe & inſtruxit*; the ſame God who brought them to wor-

Bernard. *Ser.* 1. *in Epiph. p.* 73.

ſhip his Son, had alſo himſelf taught them, that he was his Son indeed; yet 'tis not eaſy to imagine, that theſe Wiſe men ſhould know as much concerning our Saviour, being then but in his Cradle, as we do now. 'Tis like enough that they might hear him Crying like a Child in his Mothers Armes; perhaps they might ſee him, like other Babes, Sucking his Mothers Breaſts; 'tis certain that they could then ſee nothing about him with an Eye of Fleſh, but ſuch mean Circumſtances, as might have rendred him an Object rather of Compaſſion and Pity then of Worſhip and Adoration. We cannot ſay, that They did then foreſee, what we do now know of Chriſt; the ſtupendious Miracles of his Life, the mighty wonders of his Death, his Raiſing himſelf and others from their Graves; and whether they had yet any diſtinct and explicite belief of his Aſcenſion into Heaven, and his Seſſion at Gods Right Hand, we cannot tell.

But yet notwithſtanding, though they ſaw ſufficient Evidences of his preſent Poverty, but poſſibly as yet knew very little of his Future Glory, having ſeen no other viſible Character thereof, for ought we know, ſave only that of the Star; yet, as St. *Bernard* ſpeaks, *Procidunt*, They fall down before him, *Venerantur, ut Regem; adorant, ut Deum*, they Worſhip him, as a King; and which is infinitely more, they Adore him, as a God.

Bernar. *Ser.* 1. *in Epiph.* *p.* 75.

And if ſo, how much more are we obliged to do ſo, who have his Goſpel, and are acquainted with all the Stories which concern him? We do not now ſee him in a Stable, but do verily believe him to be upon a Throne; we do not now find him in the Arms of *Mary*, his Poor Mother, but do believe him to ſit at the Right Hand of God, his Father; what Signal Teſtimonials he had of his Divinity both from Heaven and Hell, from the voyce of his Father, from the deſcent of his Spirit, and from the Confeſſions of the very Devils themſelves, 'tis like enough, that theſe Wiſe men in the Text did never know, as we do. 'Tis very probable, that they might be all in their Graves, before our bleſſed Saviour did manifeſt any thing of his Glory; and by his holy Life, excellent Doctrine, and mighty Works, declare himſelf to be the Son of God.

And if They, long before any thing of this was done, did thus adore him, even when he was but a Babe, and that, in all outward Appearance, but a very Poor one too, what then ſhould we do? We, who know what incomparable Sermons he Preached, and what ſtupendious Miracles he wrought; We, who find him ſo often waited on by glorious Angels; We, who may well be ſuppoſed to have many more Demonſtrations of his Deity then theſe great Men in the Text, what muſt we do?

Tell me, ſhall we, who have a long time profeſſed the name of Chriſt, deal more rudely with him, then theſe Magicians did, who were mere Strangers to him and Proſelytes but of a Day? They came a long Journey to Worſhip him, and ſhall we think much to ſtep over the Threſhold? They fell down before him in a Stable, and ſhall not we do as much in a Church? They preſented him with Gold, Frankincenſe, and Myrrhe ; and have we juſt nothing for him? He was pleaſed to give himſelf both to and for the Sonns of Men, and ſhall we make him no Returns at all? Yes ; let us preſent him with our ſelves, and when we do ſo, we ſhall but give him, what's his own.

Let us ſhew our ſelves to be like the Perſons in the Text, Wiſe men indeed, by offering to our bleſſed Saviour the ſelf ſame Preſents, which They did. Let us give him ſomething of our Gold by works of Charity to his diſtreſſed Members ; Let us give him ſomething of our Spiritual Myrrh by the Purity of our Lives, and Acts of Mortification ; let us alſo preſent him with our Spiritual Frankincenſe by our Prayers and Praiſes in this World, that ſo we may do it in the next by our Thanksgivings, Doxologies, and Hallelujah's, for ever and ever.

Δόξα Θεῷ.